

The American Teacher

Democracy in Education; Education for Democracy

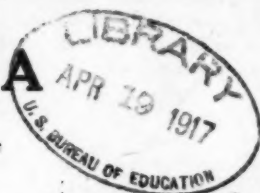
OFFICIAL ORGAN, THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

VOL. VI. No. 4

NEW YORK, APRIL, 1917

ONE DOLLAR A YEAR

RUSSIA



We salute you in the name of the
New Day

You have arisen in your might

You have overthrown your autocrats

You have struck off your chains

You have moved nearer to liberty
and civilization

You have taken a long step toward
democracy

You have taught us a lesson

DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION; EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

FRANKLIN J. KELLER, Ph. D.

De Witt Clinton High School, New York

A BODY politic can be no better than the units that compose it. But the unit can be no better than the body politic gives him opportunity to be, and the ordinary individual will be no better than the body politic inspires him to be. This principle holds true whether the environment be the schoolhouse or the prison. If then, the burden is laid finally upon the individual and no individual is given opportunity to escape his share, nor deprived of the possibility of sharing in the best in life, the result is democracy. To bring about these conditions is the problem of democracy to-day. In order that our children may live in a real democracy, we must educate them in a system that is democratic and for a society that will be democratic.

To set up a theory of education or to deduce general principles is a much easier task than that of embodying this theory and these principles in a concrete scheme, and even when the scheme is all properly worked out, it is of no value unless those who administer it and those who participate in it are convinced of its effectiveness and breathe its spirit. The personal qualities of the teaching corps are of tremendous importance. Despite these difficulties, the general outlines of, and education based upon, a philosophy of change and democracy may be stated.

The system itself should be democratic. Teachers can never imbue pupils with the idea that the world does move, that conditions do change, and that each individual's opinions are of supreme importance especially when they differ from those of others, or are truly made one's own and not simply taken over from custom, authority or precept, and repeated parrot-like—teachers can never do this unless they themselves have the opportunity to voice their opinions, to differ from superior officers in point

of doctrine, to make known to students such as may not be countenanced by trustees. If a school or system of schools is to be a living organism and not a mechanism, the units that compose it must be inspired to develop and not to stagnate. Whether Nietzsche be right or not in maintaining that the supreme instinct is power, it is undoubtedly true that when most people get it, they promptly forget all their feelings as subordinates, and forthwith become oppressors. Hardly fair is it to say that this trait is so ingrained that it precludes any thought of real democracy; rather may it be asserted that our school system and industrial system are so schemed that the individual yearns for power and uses it, whereas under other conditions such would not be the case. Let teachers express their personalities and then the teaching will be a reflection of the best democratic thought.

Perhaps even more necessary than free speech are inspiration and opportunity for teachers to develop themselves as men and women in a democratic state. To treat the teacher as a day laborer, to measure his product by the time clock, to estimate his success by the number of pupils he puts thru the grind of the curriculum, is to make of him a mechanism to transmit ideas that have in turn been transmitted to him by precept, custom and text-book. Not only is this so because the teacher has no time to develop, but the kind of man who will develop is not drawn to the profession. It is well enough for superintendents to address teachers' meetings and tell each one that he or she should have a hobby, but it is more to the point when the organization inspires one with the beauty of culture and gives opportunity for the teacher to make it part of his or her daily life.

The teacher must take part in the

shaping of policy, constructing of curricula, and the determination of methods. An interesting survival of the policy of complete separation of the administrative and teaching function is the fact that the teachers are never represented on boards of education, at least in America. Sometimes the superintendent has a seat on the board but does not vote. How strange that the whole education department is controlled by a group of men and women who do not teach, for the most part have never taught, and who never will teach! As if a business corporation should invite a board of doctors to control its affairs, or a hospital be managed by teachers. I am aware of the supposed advantage of separating the policy-forming and the administrative functions, and all that, but whereas business men will confer with their engineers and give them a decided voice in affairs, boards of education do not do that.

It is only lately, after much agitation and investigation, that New York has been given a teachers' council whose business is to "make recommendations." There can be no sense of responsibility or power in a merely recommending capacity. Teachers can not be made to feel the dignity and importance of their positions if they are limited to opinions. The best that is in them will never be developed until the opportunity for it to function is presented. There are no principles of education so general that they must not be adapted to varying and changing circumstances; and if that is so, the experience of the workers is necessary for the determination of policy. Nor can any group in a democratic state be considered so subordinate or servile that it can not be depended upon to contribute to large policies.

Granted such a democratic system as above suggested, the nature of the education would follow, naturally.

In the first place it must be kept in mind constantly that you can not mass together a lot of bad people and by

speaking of them as a social body make them good. Education is a slow process and education for democracy still slower. You have to get at the individuals and work with each of them. Society and the individual react upon each other. Society must surround the individual with conditions which will foster in him a desire to do more for society; the individual must make of society an organism such as will confer upon others even greater benefits than he himself has received.

Every child should have the opportunity to learn *every* thing and *any* thing. This means free education thru the college and professional school. There is no reason why in a so-called civilized society any body or girl should be taken out of school because the parents can not afford to send him any longer. Just so long as a child can get anything out of school he should go, and if for any reason the parents can not send him, then the people must do so collectively. However, we look forward to the time when no parent can be so situated. In these schools the curriculum must be varied so that as an adult the pupil will be able to pursue the work for which he is most fitted, without his having to become a mere specialist. Moreover, this necessarily implies a freedom of speech on the part of the faculty. The students in the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, in a petition maintained, and rightfully so, that they were entitled to learn all the doctrines and to make choice of the valid ones for themselves. The people must be fed upon particular theories in order that the hands of any one may be upheld, whether that class be plutocratic, religious, manufacturing, or laboring.

To the question, What shall we teach? the answer is both easy and impossible. It is easy because it is easy to generalize. We should say, Teach that which will develop the individual to his highest capacity, which will make him happy, and happy in such a way that his

happiness will contribute to other people's happiness. The answer is impossible because no one can completely particularize. Of course, a host of questions immediately arises. How is one to determine the pupil's highest capacity? Are all his talents to be developed? If one talent stands out and we train that to the limit, how many other things are we to give the pupil in order to make him or her a rounded man or woman? What is it in the long run that makes one happy? Hard work with adequate compensation, or light work and much play? How can one best make one's fellow-men happy? By forgetting one's self and working entirely for others? Or by concentrating on self and expecting others to do the same? By directing all one's efforts towards making this life happy, or by keeping one's thoughts ever on a future life? But these are questions that have troubled all the great educators from Plato to Dewey, and their answers have been worked out on the bases of their fundamental philosophies.

Democracy will mean certainly that each individual must have every opportunity to fit himself for the kind of work he both desires and is capable of doing well whether it be that of ditch-digger or diplomat. The curriculum must be wide open for everybody and it must be made possible for everyone to enjoy all its advantages. It means that the son of a ditch-digger may become the diplomat, and just as surely that the son of the diplomat must become the ditch-digger, if he cannot with his talents honestly earn a living in any other way. Nor is this impossible or disgraceful, for it must be remembered that a society is conceived such as will not condemn honest manual toil to poverty. Education must not be confined to methods of production, of money-making, of work, but must teach one how to live, how to get the most out of life.

The educational talk of the day is

"vocational training." Very properly we have waked up to the fact that children are leaving school unable to do things, without the knowledge or skill to earn a living. Unquestionably in a democratic society it is of great importance that each should gain economic independence. But dangers lurk in the cry. In a society that is ever changing, in which trades shift and new ones arise, in which thought changes and the old gives place to the new, the individual must be made adaptable. He must be introduced to *all* phases of life, he must not be made a slave to one trade so that manufacturers may make use of him, that the state thru its educational system may swell the pockets of the profiteer, a profiteer such as the National Association of Manufacturers, which justifies child labor by quoting Carlyle to the effect that "all true work is sacred; in all true work, be it hand labor, there is something divine. The report continues—"in the impulse of the adolescent child to go to work at fourteen there is after all something of the divine. In the child's hunger for the world of work is a true reflection of that Infinite Spirit which in seven days made the world." Professor Dewey is conscious of the danger, and says, "The kind of vocational training in which I am interested is not one which will 'adapt' workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would not be educational time-servers is to resist every move in this direction and to strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it."

Another danger lies in the fact that great emphasis upon the production phase of education is likely to limit the possibility of teaching people how to use their products to their own material welfare and the glory of their souls. And so it becomes extremely important that

the consumptional side should be stressed. In the first place, there must be implanted in the child a desire for better things, for change, for progress. There must be a divine discontent. It is well enough for the child to be taught how to prepare meals for a family of five on twenty-five cents a day, but it is of even greater importance that she be fired with the outrage of the necessity of doing it. There is too much preaching upon the necessity of economy among the poor and too little of the need of decent satisfaction. To blame the high cost of living upon the cost of high living is not only a cheap play upon words but it slightly condemns a large part of the human race to non-participation in the comforts that have been won thru centuries of struggle.

In order that these wants may be directed along lines of the highest moral and spiritual value, ideals must be present. "It should be the duty of the school to lead the community to a higher conception of life—to introduce into living something to save men from dull routine and monotony, from the deadening sense of fatigue; and not simply the man who works with machines, but particularly and more especially, the man who is in danger of making of himself a machine. Men who insist upon counting the steps in Jacob's ladder are really undesirable citizens."

The constant reiteration of *practical, practical, practical*, may well give us pause. Democracy in the minds of many is always a leveling down to the masses, whereas it should be a leveling up to the classes. When class consciousness means a feeling of dignity which comes of faith in one's self, then it becomes a virtue and a justified despisal of the lowbrow. The exaltation of a love of the mean and sordid has no

kinship with democracy.

Any system of education will be a failure unless it tries consciously and persistently to develop personality. There can be no specific subject in which personality is taught, but it must pervade every subject and exude from every teacher, and it must be such that it will not attempt to mold children in the old forms but will make every effort to develop everything that is new and worth while in the pupil.

The method of teaching must be such as will develop in each individual a habit of thinking for himself, an adaptability to changing conditions, and a freedom from the weight of custom and convention such as hinder progress. The mind should be set free for the work of the world.

Discipline must find its basis in free and varied action. The pupil should be given opportunity to do as much and as many different things as possible. The teacher must occupy the position of inspirer and critic.

One point that must be emphasized is that we must take ourselves and the world as we find them. Whatever we may think of Nietzsche's conclusions we can hardly deny the virtue of his method. He reasons thus: "I do not know whether life is, in itself, good or bad. . . . I will never know whether it would have been better for me not to have existed or to have existed. But from the moment I live I *will* that life shall be as exuberant, luxuriant and tropical as possible, within and without myself. I shall say 'Yea' to all that makes life more beautiful, more worthy of being lived, more intense." So say we who believe in a thoroughgoing democracy, and we would reach our goal thru "Democracy in Education; Education for Democracy."

SUPERIOR MERIT IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK CITY*

A. GERTRUDE JACOB,
Jamaica High School, New York.

THERE are many women teachers in the high schools who have not had the experience of being unjustly rated. They have been fortunate enough to secure "superior merit" from the start. They belong to the supervising staff and they are not enough interested in justice for their fellow workers to give the subject careful consideration.

I do not speak for those women, for I believe that "superior merit" has been a farce; that it has done untold harm; that it has brought sorrow and suffering into many homes and that it has lowered respect for authority in schools all over the city.

We have met today to discuss this question and to fight for justice and truth. We must not allow petty considerations or the spirit of retaliation to master us. Facts, not bitterness, must guide us. Otherwise we shall stoop to the level of what superior merit created for us. We are here in the open. What we have to say all may listen to. Let each one do his part at making this meeting a protest against the injustice of having salaries depend upon school ratings.

It has been said that in business compensation depends upon the worth of the employee; that a physician has to prove his ability before he reaps the benefits of success, and that therefore teachers' salaries should be graded upon the worth of the teacher. The theory is beautiful. However, there is one essential difference. The employee who exhibits initiative is the one who is promoted most rapidly. The physician who has ideas of his own becomes the greatest success. The teacher on the other hand who sinks personality and teaches to please his superior officers will be rated the most successful. If B learns that his salary was withheld because he did not teach as A would have him teach, he would be very foolish not to try to teach *a la* A,

at least until his salary was assured, no matter how antiquated A's ideas. Working for ratings is not an ideal standard. Where, however, salaries depend upon those ratings many of us have lowered our ideals and bowed to our superior officers. Most teachers welcome constructive criticism when given in the right spirit. Petty carping criticisms given for no purpose in the world except to serve as a basis for judging "superior merit" are doubly harmful. They create antagonism on the part of the teacher toward authority, and they react unfavorably on the one who stoops to give them.

Moreover, superior merit ratings are often sent to the Board of Education before a teacher has seen them. Untrue statements may be registered, gross exaggerations indulged in, personal and even libelous remarks recorded and a teacher remain in ignorance of what has been said. At a recent meeting of principals and those in charge of departments, it was suggested that written reports be handed in, signed by those making the reports, upon the ratings of candidates for superior merit. I was forcibly impressed with the opposition to the plan. Evidently there was a fear of black-and-white.

Now is it right or democratic that principals and heads of departments should be given the opportunity to make statements that may militate against a teacher's salary and not be compelled to put those statements into writing and over their own signatures? What respect can we have for those who have not enough backbone to stand behind what they say? What would any right minded principal think of a teacher who reported a student for misbehavior and was unwilling either to make a written statement or to face the accused? Surely there would be a reasonable doubt in favor of the offender.

Principals and heads of departments

* Address before The Teachers' Union of the City of New York, February 17, 1917.

appear to be the ones really responsible for the ratings when it comes to the last analysis. Visiting superintendents do not have enough time to pass fair judgments. The Board of Examiners unacquainted with the teachers must decide upon what is placed before them, for or against the candidates. Hence gross unfairness results.

If superior merit had been confined to really superior teachers, embracing only a very small per cent., the feeling against it would not have been so strong as it is. First assistantship judged by a definite standard, not on insignificant generalities, has never been assailed. When in the same school, however, teachers notably weak in discipline have been granted superior merit, while some of the oldest and best have had it withheld, one is forced to the conclusion that it has been and is being used as a whip. Over and over teachers who have had the courage of their convictions and have spoken in opposition to what long years of experience have taught them to be wrong, have been disciplined by having distorted reports sent to headquarters and in consequence have been denied superior merit.

Therefore, the purpose for which superior merit was created has been defeated. Instead of increasing the efficiency of the teaching staff it has tended to decrease it. Anything that affects a teacher in a nervous way has its reaction on the student body. No one who is worried over financial matters can do his best work.

With worry and bitterness may also be classed social stigma. Can a teacher feel the same self-respect when every little idiosyncrasy is held up to the limelight? Do not students quickly learn upon whom the principal frowns, even without the carping criticisms which are so often administered before a class? Visits from superior officers grow to be nightmares. The minute one appears at the door of a class room spontaneity on the part of the teacher ceases. He is nervous and

upset. The class soon reflects his attitude. Many times the one who judges the teacher spends but a few minutes in his room. He sees the teacher at his worst. Is that snap shot judgment fair?

The criticism of a superior officer may reflect his own weakness. He cannot be a specialist on all lines. High school teachers are specialists in their own subjects, or the Board of Examiners was at fault not only in admitting them in the first place, but in granting them permanent licenses. A superior officer who proves his ignorance of what is being taught by the erroneous criticism which he makes, cannot merit the respect of the teacher.

Nor are those who are directors of special branches, and supposed to be authorities in their line of work, always exempt from exhibiting a lack of knowledge on fundamental points. Teachers working for superior merit have had their classes handicapped by this unfortunate condition more than once. Such absurd criticisms have been made, when the question of rating has come up, that those criticisms have been handed out as jokes by the teachers themselves. When a superior officer, thru his own display of inability to judge of real teaching, renders himself an object of ridicule, it tends neither to elevate the schools under his supervision or to raise the moral tone of the profession. For example, a woman of many years' successful experience as a physical training teacher came up for her superior merit rating. She was visited by a supervising officer of the department of physical training. The gymnasium was long and narrow and the class was large. In order to have room enough to teach a dance she faced her class to the side wall. In technical terms, which doubtless led the Board of Examiners to believe that a serious pedagogical mistake had been made, that fact was recorded against her. Now what pos-

(Continued on page 60)

THE FLUOROSCOPE

IN THE early days of the employment of the X-ray for scientific research, many observers suffered on account of the general ignorance of the burning and withering effect of long continued and repeated stimulation of human tissues by the new and powerful force. Thus, the hands of some valuable workers came to be practically useless because of the strange malady. But happily the newer workers have the benefit of the discovery that a screen of lead interposed between the rays and the body of the observer would protect him against injurious consequences.

THE AMERICAN TEACHER is training up a new body of workers. They may be referred to occasionally as Fluoroscope Observers, as in the present observation. Each will be supplied with a leaden screen through which not even the penetrating gaze of the observed can pass. We shall leave to the imagination of the reader the real nature of the screen, for along with the absorbing interest of this new endeavor, there are involved some elements of danger.

V

THE VISITOR (*after having expressed admiration for the beautiful new high school building*)—But who is the man with the bald head and the gigantic red mustache? He is wearing a conspicuous plaid suit and a flamboyant necktie. Is he the janitor?

THE FLUOROSCOPE OBSERVER—No, indeed, that is our principal.

THE VISITOR—You don't say so! Excuse my frankness, but if I had met him elsewhere I should have taken him for a bar tender. All he needs to complete the picture is an apron. What kind of principal does he make?

THE F. O.—Well, if you insist, he is both little and mean. If he has any redeeming qualities the politicians who secured his appointment might tell you what they are. He may be a "good fellow" with them. But with us he is

little and mean. Little things are his specialty.

With pencil and note book in hand, he counts the pieces of chalk left over night at the blackboard, the pieces of paper dropped on the floor by pupils, occasionally picking up one himself. He observes the number of scratches on the desks and tables caused by use. He goes stealthily through the halls peeking through doorways slightly opened by himself—carefully keeping out, if assistance seems to be needed, for it is not his business to be helpful.

Woe to the teacher who incurs his displeasure! The fall of Satan from Heaven to the burning lake were not greater than the fall of the poor victim.

THE VISITOR—And what may cause this terrible wrath?

THE F. O.—Oh, almost anything that is trivial. It may be a look not flattering enough, or an inquiry about a "B" rating, or an uncovered school book, or a case of discipline, or an omitted record. Any of these is enough to stir the royal wrath. And why not? We forget, "The King can do no wrong."

And so we work under supervision, without sympathy, petty and unprofessional in the extreme—a supervision mean, untruthful and given to favoritism.

THE VISITOR—Ah, he plays favorites! Now that you speak of it I am not surprised, for his clothes and his manners make me think of the race track, too. But how do the favorites like him?

THE F. O.—Of course, the favorites may not like him, but they do fear him. The rule of the New York educational game has always been to jam things thru and to jam down any objector standing in the way. "Getting in Dutch" is a bad business, and it pays the teacher to flatter. In fact, it pays at the rate of at least \$150 a year, which is no small emolument.

(Continued on page 61)

The American Teacher

Democracy in Education: Education for Democracy

Published monthly, except July and August, by
THE AMERICAN TEACHER COMPANY, INC.,
70 Fifth Avenue, New York City

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At the time of expiration, a bill will be found in the copy. Subscribers are requested to give prompt notice of changes in address.

Remittances should be made in postal money-order, express order, draft, stamps or check (New York exchange).

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, ONE DOLLAR FOR THE YEAR—FOREIGN, \$1.10.

Entered as second-class matter, February 21, 1912, at the Post Office, at New York, N. Y.; under the Act of March 3, 1879.

VOL. VI APRIL, 1917 No. 4

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(Affiliated with American Federation of Labor)

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LABOR AND LOYALTY

EVEN before this number of THE AMERICAN TEACHER is printed our country may be at war with the government of the German people. Should war come, the workers of this country stand ready to support the government in every possible way, to the end that the democratic and humanitarian principles that are at the foundation of this nation may be preserved in the world.

The readers and supporters of THE AMERICAN TEACHER are in large part among that great body of citizen workers who have fought, relentlessly, the idea of war upon any nation. They know who bear the burdens of war, and they know who profit by its fury. The representatives of organized labor who met in Washington in March, had a great responsibility, the President of our American Federation of Teachers among them. Even at the time of the conference in Washington the outbreak of war seemed a certainty. The great question was what should be the course of labor? As we face the great crisis we can see no alternative. Labor must stand ready to give its service.

The loyalty thus pledged in the name of the common people is not to be confused with the hysterical shouting and gesticulation that pass in many quarters as manifestations of "patriotism." It is not that unqualified and unquestioned submission to the dictates and whims of men who happen to be in authority, under all circumstances. It is a sincere devotion to the ostensible purpose of the government in promoting the aims and ideals of the American people, in the interests of wider liberties, more firm security of human rights, and further extension of the essentials of civilization.

We shall make our prayers or our propaganda to avoid the stupidities as well as the brutalities of war, up to the very moment that may at last find us at war. But when war comes, if it comes, we shall have responsibilities to meet quite as incumbent upon us as the responsibilities of loyalty to the government and its major purpose. Upon us

will rest the responsibility to guard those fundamental attainments of such civilization as we have against the ruthless assaults of privilege and greed and reaction. Upon us will rest the responsibility to resist the temptation to exploit children and other defenseless members of the community on the pretext of necessity; the temptation to deprive the workers of their protection against conditions that rob of health and sanity. We shall be responsible for keeping alive those ideals of justice and liberty and humanity that are the most serious victims of every war.

We shall be loyal. We shall not, however, permit our loyalty to the "government" to blind us to our loyalty to the heart of the nation. Nor shall we let it blind us to the loyalties that this nation still owes to mankind today and tomorrow. We shall be loyal, but we shall not be blind.

THE NEW ERA

ONE of my first aims is to secure your coöperation—coöperation in which loyalty will mean loyalty to the prime object of education, the development of the child. I do not feel that I need ask coöperation of you, for you as true teachers will gladly welcome all opportunities for coöperating. I have such faith in your response that I believe that Minneapolis schools may give the world an example of efficiency secured by coöperation never before seen.

THE above paragraph is taken from the first address of Superintendent B. B. Jackson, of Minneapolis, Minn., delivered recently before the teachers of that city. The paragraph speaks for itself, and what it says is of tremendous significance in a long and selfish history of school administration in which loyalty in school affairs has always been interpreted as faithfulness to an individual official. The entire address of Superintendent Jackson should be in the hands of every superintendent and school-board member in the land.

If it were possible for the teachers also to read the address and the story of the selection of Superintendent Jack-

son by the vote of the teachers of Minneapolis, the five-year-old dream of THE AMERICAN TEACHER that teachers should have a voice in the selection of their superior officers would cease to be ridiculed. We extend to our active and intelligent contemporary, *The Elementary Teacher*, of Baltimore, our hearty felicitations on printing the address and the story of the selection of the superintendent for the educational public.

We trust that every reader of this who has given a thought to a brighter future for teachers and pupils will "spunk up" and start the movement in his school for sharing in the administration of the school and the school system. In another column we quote again from Superintendent Jackson's address to indicate a practical line of endeavor, the revision of a course of study. Every school system needs its course of study revised. In fact, the more intelligent the community is the oftener the course of study must be revised.

Our sun is rising at last, and it is so bright we can scarce bear to look upon it.

CONFUSION OF ISSUES

JUST as an intelligent interest in the improvement of the educational service by the selection of administrators on the basis of merit was beginning to be manifested by the New York City Board of Education, we are given a rude, discouraging shock. At its meeting on March 28, the Board voted almost unanimously to reject the transfer and promotion of Dr. Alexander Fichandler, Principal of P. S. 165 Brooklyn, for the ostensible reason that he was not sufficiently "patriotic." And the most flagrant evidence of his lack of patriotism was his refusal to sign the "pledge" promulgated by the Mayor's Committee on National Defense—a "pledge" that several members of the Board themselves refused to sign, and that many ardent militarists suspected of being conceived and promulgated for ulterior private purposes.

The Board of Superintendents had se-

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lected Mr. Fichandler for the principalship of a consolidated school which is intended to house 6,000 children. Presumably this professional staff knew what it was doing. The elementary schools committee of the Board of Education had approved the selection and had recommended its confirmation by the Board. In a sweep of passion the Board voted 32 to 4 to reject the nomination.

The 32 votes represent perhaps a dozen different reasons and motives, including personal, political and racial prejudices as well as sincere doubts concerning the wisdom of the Superintendents' selection. The sincere members of the Board, of whom there are at present more than ever before, may have to acknowledge that in an unguarded moment of strain and passion they permitted themselves to be exploited or stampered by professional politicians.

The next move is for the Board of Superintendents, upon whom devolves the duty of again making a nomination for the position. The professional level attained by this Board will be indicated by its response to the action of the Commissioners. We wonder whether the Superintendents will accept the vote as a rebuke of their own experiences, or whether they will reaffirm their professional judgment and challenge the politicians to emerge from the shelter of "the flag"—which, as history has abundantly demonstrated, can be as vigorously waved by rascals and charlatans as by sincere lovers of their country and their fellow humans.

If there are good pedagogical or administrative reasons for the rejection of the technical staff's recommendations, they should be openly stated. The only reasons that the public was permitted to hear in this instance were either trivial or ridiculously irrelevant, or based on a gross misconception of the function of a Board of Education in an American City.

The answer to the question in the first letter on page 63 is, *Yes!*

FULFILLMENT OF A PROPHECY

The following letter from the Board of Education was addressed to the teachers of Minneapolis:

BOARD OF EDUCATION,

Minneapolis, Jan. 26, 1917.

To the Principals and Teachers of Minneapolis Public Schools:

The committee appointed to recommend a successor to Dr. Spaulding are desirous of considering the question from every possible angle, with a view of obtaining for the city a superintendent who will be best qualified to serve the interests of the schools, and, more particularly, the children.

The committee also desire to weigh carefully the question as to whether or not they shall recommend for the position a man from this city or State or one from some other section of the country.

With these matters in view, it has seemed to the committee very desirable to have an expression from the teachers and principals, who should be most closely in touch with the educational situation and the needs of the children.

We are, therefore, asking you to write a letter indicating your views of the necessary qualifications in a superintendent, and also particularly stating your opinion of the work, character and attitude, in contact with teachers and children, of the *assistant superintendent in charge of your district*, and the *principal of your high school*.

It is hoped that we may obtain from you an opinion that will be entirely dispassionate, free from any bias or personal prejudice, and a frank statement of your best views and judgment.

In order that you may feel perfectly free in the expression of your opinion, you are at liberty to send in your letter *unsigned*, writing, however, on the reverse side of *this sheet*, and mailing in the *enclosed addressed envelope*. Time being a vital element, you are requested to prepare and mail your report *immediately*.

Please do not consult with any other teacher or principal, or show your letter to anyone.

Very cordially yours,

HENRY DEUTSCH,
Chairman.

In response to this letter ninety per cent. of the teachers of Minneapolis endorsed Mr. B. B. Jackson, assistant superintendent, as the possessor of the qualifications desirable in a superintendent.

At the Board meeting, Mr. Bennett B. Jackson was chosen superintendent of the Minneapolis schools, being the choice of the Board of Education and of the teaching force of the city. When interviewed Mr. Jackson said:

Present teaching and administration methods will be continued in the public schools, altho changes in the methods will be made at necessary times to keep the schools apace with the general progress of things.

The educational system as already established is a good one, and I will try to continue it with as little friction as possible.

The teachers feel that while harmony is necessary to success, co-operation is the vital factor, without which no superintendent can bring the schools to the high standard desired. Mr. Jackson may rely upon this factor and we predict a most successful term of office for him. —*The Elementary Teacher*, February, 1917.

SUPERIOR MERIT

(Continued from page 55)

sible difference could it make which way a class faced while exercising? A person with no knowledge of physical training would at once recognize that that supervising officer was hard up for something to criticize. Yet in black and white, a silent testimony to the unfairness of superior merit ratings, that record remains filed against that teacher.

Teachers who had always received high ratings and who had passed their twelfth year of service before 1912 in many cases suddenly found themselves in an anomalous position. Term of service was changed and superior merit ratings were withheld. Was that law intended to be retroactive?

Of what value are records if supervising officers are not willing to stand back of what they say? Moreover, except for ratings, how could a teacher be judged as to his standing when in his twelfth year who had passed that period several years prior to the date when the law went into effect?

While the brunt of the injustice of superior merit has fallen on the teacher, I wish to say a word for the kindly, conscientious supervising officer. We know that he is our friend and that his position is not an enviable one. If he withholds ratings because of manifest lack of ability on the part of the teacher he may bring suffering to that teacher's family. Living expenses are high these days. If in order to meet this condition he reports favorably upon inefficient candidates, he may justly be accused of showing partiality. Teachers judge each other. It does arouse feeling when a poor teacher is granted superior merit and a good one denied it in the same school. This kind of thing weakens authority and militates against the school. Moreover, a principal should be free from as much worry as possible if he is to give his best services in a professional way. He is human and adverse comment does not help him any more than it helps the teachers.

PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION

Let me now point out some very effective ways of co-operating. One of the great and pressing needs of the Minneapolis schools is the complete revision of the course of study. The plan as formulated by Doctor Spaulding and the Educational Council placed this in the hands of committees of teachers, each under the leadership of an assistant superintendent. We of the superintendent's office have sought to enlist the help of the teachers by opinion and suggestion, and it is our hope that the course of study will be the composite opinion of the teachers of Minneapolis. It entails much extra work on the part of those having each subject immediately in hand, and I beseech you to be ready and willing to offer your suggestions and criticisms.—Superintendent B. B. JACKSON, in "Inaugural" address to the teachers of Minneapolis.

THE FLUOROSCOPE

(Continued from page 56)

THE VISITOR—Tell me, do the pupils like their principal?

THE F. O.—Their attitude toward him is non-committal. In the early days of the school, the mention of his name called forth derision. Now they say nothing. Children learn very soon that to tell the truth about a disagreeable person is "impudence". The fear of punishment for mentioning ugly facts while we are children makes cowards of us as adults. We ought to listen more to the children, I know, but how can we?

THE VISITOR—Has no attempt been made to improve conditions?

THE F. O.—Oh, yes, we had an investigation of the schools some years ago. A great deal of time was given to studying the methods of administration in operation in the school system. An extensive report was made, and a large amount of discussion involving charges and counter-charges was indulged in. But none of the investigators saw anything of the ugly behavior of the supervising staff as it showed itself in the absence of visitors. When the investigators visited our school the principal followed at their heels, and talked out loud when they entered classrooms. This helped to while away the time, and made it unnecessary to think at all in deciding on a teacher's fitness. The principal did that and informed the investigators. Yet we were told that this was a square deal.

THE VISITOR—Are you hopeful of a change?

THE F. O.—Well, so long as our superior waxes oily and prosperous there is small hope that the ultimate pulse of life will give him and us peace. And we are not mean enough to wish him on some other school by the official device of transfer.

It is rumored that some new elements in the present administration of the

schools do not think an incompetent and selfish beast should sit like a czar upon the necks of the teachers and the pupils of a public institution.

THE VISITOR—By the way, have you heard that the greatest of all the czars has been deposed by the people?

THE F. O.—Yes, that is just what I was thinking of.

LONDON TEACHERS MURMUR

WE learn from the *London Journal of Education*, which has always been considered a "conservative" and dignified and proper journal, that a conference of representatives of London teachers has rejected a proposed war bonus on the ground that it was trivial in itself, confined to a minority of the teachers, and accompanied by "an objectionable inquisition into the private affairs of the recipients." This action was then endorsed by a meeting of 2500 teachers. The conference described the plan of the County Council as an "Indignity put upon the teaching profession" and the *Journal* approves the characterization, and adds:

The prominent feature, indeed, in the business, as in the matter of the infant teachers, is that the Council acts towards teachers as it would not dare to act towards a body of workmen, with the power of the strike behind them. It trades confidently upon the teachers' public spirit and sense of duty. It is this meanness which is so exasperating, and which will, if the Council are obstinate, turn an invaluable body of public servants into an indignant mass of malcontents.

WORK

Morality says that occupations must be significant, not frivolous; must be health-giving, not health-taking; must be self-chosen, not imposed; must be educative, not deadening; must be sources of happiness and delight, not of mortal weariness and despair.—C. HANFORD HENDERSON, in *Children of Good Fortune*.

THE WASHINGTON SALARY SITUATION

AFTER a hard fight, in which they had the support of The Government Employees' Federation, The District Federation of Labor, The American Federation of Labor and The American Federation of Teachers, the school employees of the District of Columbia are rejoicing in a slight advance in salary provided by the appropriation of the last Congress for the financial support of the District during the next fiscal year. Altho the increase is inadequate to meet the changing price levels, it will help to lighten the teachers' burdens somewhat.

The conference of labor representatives and school employees agreed to ask Congress for a uniform rate of increase for all classes of government workers, including teachers. A sub-committee of seven kept in constant touch with appropriation legislation affecting salaries, and with labor leaders in Congress. The chairman of the legislative committee of the High School Teachers' Union was a member of this sub-committee.

The bill as finally passed provides an increase of ten per cent. for teachers receiving not over \$1200; and five per cent. for those receiving more than \$1200 up to \$1800. As the increase is computed on the "basic salary," and as most of the teachers are on a basic salary of \$1000, the larger increase will be received by most teachers. This addition to the salaries is limited to the fiscal year 1917-1918. Next year the struggle will have to be resumed.

Residents of the District of Columbia are laboring under peculiar difficulties in that they can only petition Congress for their needs for they have not the vote, and yet they pay taxes to an amount of over eight million dollars annually.

"Our situation before Congress," writes Mr. William J. Wallis, Chairman of the Central Committee of School Employees on Salary Increase, would be very different, if we had Representatives and Senators like other Americans."

THE SONG OF THE "SUB"

(Indebtedness to T. HOOD.)

With brain too tired to think,
With body too weary to work,
A struggling "sub" clung to her job
Teaching day in, day out.

Sub-sub-sub—

Drearily dinned in her ear,
And still with a heart that hoped and
prayed

She sang the "Song of the Sub."

"Sub-sub-sub—

For hunger wants his bread;

Sub-sub-sub—

Till youth and hope have fled.

It's Oh, to be a sub

And drudge from day to day,

To yield the best that one can give

And then be turned away!

"Sub-sub-sub—

Till the heart begins to sink;

Sub-sub-sub—

Till the brain no more can think.

Cram and worry and work,

Work and worry and cram,

Until the very noblest aim

Is shattered by an "exam".

"O men with sisters dear!

O men with brothers and friends!

'Tis not a convict's soul you try,

But teachers who work with brains
and hands.

Sub-sub-sub—

Each day the task renew;

Filling a teacher's useful place

Yet getting no teacher's due."

With brain too tired to think,
With body too weary to work,
A struggling "sub" clung to her job
Teaching day in, day out.

Sub-sub-sub—

Drearily dinned in her ear;

And still with a heart that hoped and
prayed

She sang the "Song of the Sub".

C. C.

WHAT THEY SAY

To the Editors, THE AMERICAN TEACHER:

This is just a note to tell you how much some of us value THE AMERICAN TEACHER. I am giving it a paragraph in the April issue of *Common Ground*.

After years of deception by so-called teachers' papers our teachers are refreshed by the real thing when they see it.

Are the editors *teachers* actually in service?

RALPH P. IRELAND.

Editor, *Common Ground*.

To the Editors, THE AMERICAN TEACHER:

Permit a disappointed reader of THE AMERICAN TEACHER to protest against the policy of its lugubrious editors. Your columns have of late become infernally dry. A somnolent atmosphere hangs heavily over the pages of your monthly. Statistics, detailed reports of presidents, verbatim reproductions of addresses and strident appeals for unionization have made your leaflet as uninspiring as the *Statistical Abstract* or *The World Almanac*.

Why not turn the scowl into a smile? Why not discard the frozen mask? Humor, and its handmaidens, satire and irony, have done more to move men and women to think or act than a welter of dreary facts.

The pithy comments on your covers are not sufficient to lure the unsuspecting reader to masticate all that is contained between them.

In short, assume a human, friendly form. Add heat to light. Readers will then enjoy your sheet, and not skim its barren leaves.

Yours for a change,

FELIX SPER.

Brooklyn.

To the Editors, THE AMERICAN TEACHER:

Your paper is good. I am often tempted to write an article for it when something you say stirs me up.

ALBERT W. RANKIN.

College of Education,
University of Minnesota.

To the Editors, THE AMERICAN TEACHER:

Enclosed is my check for two years' subscription to THE AMERICAN TEACHER. It is a live little sheet, and deserves great success. I am delighted every time I get it, for THE AMERICAN TEACHER means so much for the future of our profession. More than that, it means so much for the living material which we, as teachers, handle.

LOUIS S. FRIEDLAND.

College of the City of New York.

PENSIONS

The articles on sound principles of pension legislation, by Mr. Paul Studensky, have been reprinted in a neat pamphlet, with a special introduction, a bibliography and a comparative table. Copies may be obtained from THE AMERICAN TEACHER, 70 Fifth avenue, New York, in lots of twelve or more, ten cents each, postage prepaid. In lots of fifty or more, eight cents.

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The Unions and the War



WE, the officers of the National and International Trade Unions of America in national conference assembled in the capital of our nation, hereby pledge ourselves in peace or in war, in stress or in storm, to stand unreservedly by the standards of liberty and the safety and preservation of the institutions and ideals of our Republic.

In this solemn hour of our nation's life, it is our earnest hope that our Republic may be safeguarded in its unswerving desire for peace; that our people may be spared the horrors and the burdens of war; that they may have the opportunity to cultivate and develop the arts of peace, human brotherhood and a higher civilization.

But, despite all our endeavors and hopes, should our country be drawn into the maelstrom of the European conflict, we, with these ideals of liberty and justice herein declared, as the indispensable basis for national policies, offer our services to our country in every field of activity to defend, safeguard and preserve the Republic of the United States of America against its enemies, whosoever they may be, and we call upon our fellow workers and fellow citizens in the holy name of Labor, Justice, Freedom and Humanity to devotedly and patriotically give like service.

From Declaration of the National Trade Union Executives, issued at Washington, March 12, 1917.

